

Approved For Release 2005/12/14 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000600200025-6

The Associated Press  
22 June 1983

By IRA R. ALLEN

: WASHINGTON

Foia

Promising a better response to legitimate requests for documents and no future civil liberties abuses, the CIA is pleading with Congress to exempt it from a portion of the Freedom of Information Act.

Without the exemption, the lives of American spies and informants could be threatened, Deputy CIA Director John McMahon told the Senate Intelligence Committee Tuesday.

But he said the proposed exemptions would not apply to information that could reveal cover-ups of illegal behavior by the spy agency, and he vowed, "There will not ever again be a repeat of the improprieties of the past."

The CIA was rocked by disclosures in the mid-1970s that it engaged in illegal spying against domestic dissident groups.

The bill sought by the CIA and backed by the administration and committee Chairman Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., would exempt the agency from having to search its extensive operations files before turning down requests on security grounds.

McMahon said the public would benefit from the exemptions by having the backlog of legitimate requests reduced from the current two-to-three-year waiting period.

Showing a picture of a staffer dwarfed by a 9.5-foot stack of requested documents, McMahon said the requirement the agency search its files to determine what to protect takes up valuable time from agents. He also said it could lead to the mistaken release of a name or incident compromising national security, and violates the CIA's need to "compartmentalize" its files to prevent one section from learning another's secrets.

"Although, in the case of records gleaned from operational files, virtually none of this information is released to the requester, security risks remain which are inherent in the review process," McMahon said.

Even when fragmentary information is released, he said, "Those (informants) who have trusted us may lose their reputation, their livelihood, or their lives."

As a result, McMahon said, there are cases in which the CIA never obtains vital information because of reluctance by sources.

Approved For Release 2005/12/14 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000600200025-6